

Region 10

Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington

Grantees Across Country Coordinate Efforts

City of Palmer WWTP, Alaska

The 104(g)(1) program provides a unique environment for professional networking—making it possible for even a small community to receive assistance from the nation’s top experts. For instance, Kerry Lindley, a 104(g)(1) technical assistance provider with the State of Alaska’s Department of Environmental Conservation, arranged to have Paul Olander, a 104(g)(1) technical assistance provider from Vermont and an expert on cold-weather operation of lagoons, help the City of Palmer with its aerated lagoon system.

“Without these types of programs, small communities are left with no support and few choices.”

—James H. Giyer, Public Works Superintendent,
Palmer, Alaska, 1997

The City of Palmer was out of compliance with its permit and was under a compliance order when Lindley and Olander began evaluating the facility and its problems in 1997. The facility was having odor problems in the spring and was violating its permit because of an inadequate aeration system and possible short-circuiting in the system’s lagoons.

“[The 104(g)(1) program] has allowed the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation to provide on-site technical assistance to many rural communities throughout our state over the past 10 years. Their training and technical assistance has contributed greatly to wastewater discharge quality and other operational improvements, while actually lowering costs to the communities by reducing energy consumption. In addition, many local operators have received their certification through the assistance of this program.”

—Frank H. Murkowski, United States Senator, Alaska, 1994

Lindley suggested some short-term solutions to the odor problem, while Olander evaluated the lagoon’s performance and worked with the city’s engineers toward a permanent fix. The project is ongoing, and city officials are enthusiastic in their praise of the assistance and its results. The 104(g)(1) program has provided information and documentation to Alaska’s Municipal Grant Section, resulting in grant funding to Palmer for lagoon management.

Assistance Helps With Common Problem of Untrained Operators

Star WWTP, Idaho

The Star Wastewater Treatment Plant project is not an award-winning situation or even a very innovative one. It is, however, very typical of many 104(g)(1) assistance projects.

In spring 1999, the Idaho legislature passed a law requiring certification of wastewater operators in the future; however, before certification can be made mandatory, a negotiated rulemaking committee must first hammer out certification details. In Idaho, not requiring certification “has meant that the larger cities have certified people, but that the rural communities (far the greatest in number) have mechanics or police [officers]...who run the wastewater system as a kind of after-thought,” wrote Veronica Shawcroft, 104(g)(1) technical assistance provider from Boise State University, in her description of the Star project.

In Region 10, during FY99 146 small municipal facilities were provided with wastewater technical assistance and training. Of the facilities completing training in FY99, 63 percent have completely returned to compliance with their NPDES permits. Another 33 percent of facilities obtaining training during FY99 have improved performance at their facilities.

Shawcroft’s assistance to the Star Wastewater Treatment Plant was essentially to train the plant’s operator. At the beginning of the 104(g)(1) assistance, Shawcroft found that the operator did not understand the plant’s lagoon process. Violations were occurring

whenever the sand filters were out of service and plugging was occasionally a problem. Shawcroft developed an operational checklist along with a maintenance checklist for the filters. She also helped the operator become certified.

Shawcroft helped prepare the operator for the new challenges that would come with an expected changeover from a lagoon system to a secondary treatment plant. She suggested guidelines for evaluating the engineering proposals the city has received and advised the operator about ways to research the performance records of suggested systems.

New Regulations Challenge Operator Skills

Castle Rock WWTP, Washington

The Castle Rock Wastewater Treatment Plant is an excellent example of the substantial environmental benefits and huge financial savings that have been realized through the 104(g)(1) assistance program—savings that have been achieved with relatively insignificant initial outlays.

Carl Jones, a 104(g)(1) technical assistance provider with the Washington State Department of Ecology, needed only one week to teach the Castle Rock operators how to achieve compliance with new regulations that limited chlorine use. Jones demonstrated how a dechlorination system works, trained operators on the equipment they needed, and taught them how to control chlorine limits. At the end of this assistance, the operators were trained, and the treatment plant was in compliance with the new regulations.

Jones’ assistance required only about \$100 of 104(g)(1) funds, and it saved Castle Rock

approximately \$2,500 in reduced operating expenses, in addition to avoiding a probable fine of \$10,000 for each day the facility was out of compliance. The 104(g)(1) assistance also eliminated an estimated 450 pounds of excess chlorine from being released each year into the environment.

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